



Spider Jones Presents

This Month's Dream Fight: Smokin' Joe Frazier vs Iron Mike Tyson

One of the most heated debates among boxing fans is the greatest of the great. If Ali and Tyson had got it on in their prime, who would have won? Perhaps the fleet-footed Ali's razor-sharp jab would have carved Iron Mike like a Christmas turkey. Or would've Tyson's right-hand haymaker knocked the greatest colder than a polar bear's lunch? Perhaps, that's why fantasizing has become second nature among we fight fans. It's simply our way of creating an element of excitement in a sport, which has lost a great deal of its nobility and luster.

That all being said, even through its glory years, fight fans were engaging in heated debates over who could have chilled who. There are those who swore Dempsey was the baddest. Others proclaimed Marciano was the man. The appealing aspects about this type of fantasizing is the endless list of mythical fights. There are also very few limitations. However, do bear in mind, you must stay within specific weight divisions. Hearns taking on Jack Johnson or Willie Pep in with Larry Holmes won't cut it. There's far too much of a weight differential. Pitting Hearns against Jack Johnson would be like Charley Tuna taking on jaws. Perhaps Sugar Ray Leonard and "Hammerin" Henry Armstrong is your choice. Leonard with those speed demon reflexes vs. the man they called "little perpetual motion," Henry Armstrong. This battle brings together two all-time welterweight greats. The ultimate pressure fighter, in Armstrong, and the sweet moving, hard punching Ray Leonard. Armstrong is the only man to have simultaneously held three world titles and Ray Leonard, the only pugilist to capture titles in five different weight classes. What a lathering of leather this one would have been. I call them dream fights because reality prevents us from ever seeing the likes of them. But that's not to say we can't fantasize about it. So let's conjure up some great battles and remember there are no constraints except they must have been champions in the same weight divisions.

From the very day these explosive gladiators agreed to the contract, the pugilistic world was a buzz with excitement. Smokin' Joe and Iron Mike were going to do the do! This spelled only two words: bombs away! Even the hard to excite press was pumped for this one ... and with just cause. Very seldom did they get the opportunity to witness heavyweights of this caliber, who were willing to go to war. The prospect of such super matches was a rarity. Unfortunately, most of the current crop have put money ahead of pride and glory. They love to roll their shoulders and in swaggering fashion, talk-the-talk, but seldom do we see them walk-the-walk. The prognostications are flowing around like mosquitoes at a nudist colony. "Tyson's going to dust Frazier's ass in two," proclaims

some guy wearing a Mets cap. His companion shouts back, "I'll take Smokin' Joe." Among them cops and mobsters mingled with high priced lawyers. Clergymen and sinners are exchanging bets. Athletes, movie stars, entertainers, journalist, boxing insiders and other various personalities are rubbing shoulders. The scent of cologne and sweet perfumes mixed in with the acrid pungency of cigars hovers in the air like smog over L.A. It's the perfect atmosphere for a heavyweight title fight. Up in the cheaper seats the young bad-asses from Spanish Harlem, the Bronx, Queens Brownsville and Brooklyn are shucking and jiving. Most of them favor their homeboy Tyson. Further up, in nose bleed territory, a couple gangs had made the trek across the Hudson River, from Jersey City. They want Frazier from Philly to do the New York kid in! Security is heavy and for good reason. Neighborhood rivalries has often brought out the worst in the culturally diverse crowds that patronize the gardens.

For the moment, the gang truces are in effect. Hopefully, the only war or violence we will witness comes from inside the canvas war zone. The bell sounds for round one. Forget all that sweet-science stuff. From the get-go, this one belongs in a telephone booth. Both are explosive punchers who seldom take a back step. The Vegas bookies have given 2-1 odds on Tyson. The Catskill thunder is bigger and stronger than Frazier. Still, the question remains, can he stand up to likes of Smokin' Joe's relentless pressure?

The two fighters clash at center ring like a pair of bull moose. Tyson throws the first punch, missing with a wicked left hook. Frazier bobbin' and weavin', fires back a solid right that catches Tyson high on the forehead. Tyson attempts to tie up his tormentor, but Smokin' Joe breaks free and lands two more solid left hooks to the head. Tyson's knees buckle, but the 23 year-old New Yorker refuses to go down. Frazier moves in blasting away with both hands. Tyson, looking to land that sledgehammer right, returns the fire. First, Tyson gets rocked and then Frazier is wobbled: you hit me and I'll hit you and lets see what happens. It's a glorious fight! But you get the distinct feeling that at this torrid pace there's no way it's going the distance. Suddenly, the vaunted left-hook that floored Ali and crushed both Ellis and Quarry, finds pay-dirt and for the first time in his career, Tyson's down! Referee Zack Clayton quickly moves in and orders Frazier to the neutral corner. The count begins and by four, Tyson is up on one knee. By nine, he's on his feet and raring to go. Clayton wipes off the gloves and checks his eyes, they're clear. He motions the combatants to continue.

Round two is a classic and makes the first one look like a Sunday school picnic. The bell rings and both fighters charge from their corners like they were shot out of a cannon. Frazier connects with a solid left-hook to the head. In between rounds, trainer Eddie Futch has instructed him to apply that trademark pressure. Tyson takes another left hook and answers back with a left-hook, right uppercut combination. He slips a right and rips home a devastating left hook. Smoking Joe is hurt! His legs have turned to Jello. He clinches in desperation; but, a clinch is not the place to be when your opponent is bigger, stronger and has more power. The ref breaks them up and signals to go on. Rounds three through five belong to Tyson. That's not to say that Joe wasn't holding his own: he got home some good shots. But Tyson's brute strength, thunderous power and superior speed have been working in his favor. As round six comes to it's conclusion, it's apparent that Tyson's wilting body attack has taken a dramatic toll on Frazier. Smokin' Joe labors back to his corner and spits out the mouthpiece. He then flops down on his stool like he doesn't

have the legs left. His swollen face resembles something, which has been run through a meat grinder. Over in Tyson's corner, trainer Kevin Rooney senses Frazier was ready for the taking. He implores Iron Mike to put the pressure on. At the sound of the bell, the Catskills Thunder rushes from his corner. He's looking to take Frazier out. Throwing caution to the wind he runs into a left hook, but Frazier's punches no longer carry sleep-drops: they have lost their steam. Tyson slides under a looping right and batters viciously away at Frazier. Smokin' Joe fights back gallantly. But his tree stump legs throb with fatigue and his reflexes no longer adhere to his command. Suddenly, Tyson lands a crushing over-hand right to the jaw. Smokin' Joe's knees buckle and he clings for dear life.

Tyson pushes him off and explodes yet another right upper. Joe crumbles to the canvas and rolls over on his side as Zack Clayton begins the count. It not Frazier's first introduction to the canvas, he'd tasted it twice in a fight a few years back, against the rugged Oscar Bonavena. Tyson is the hunter, and like all predators, he can smell the blood. He rushes in for the kill. He fakes a left hook and comes over top with a pulverizing right to the jaw. Frazier falls into a clinch. Tyson pushes him off and rips away with both hands to the body. The punches are not that quick. Under normal circumstance, Joe could probably slip most of them. But he's hurt, fatigued and incoherent. In boxing lingo, "he's walking the lonely boulevards of Queer Street".

Perhaps your dream fight had a different outcome. Maybe Frazier would have emerged victoriously ... No doubt he was a great fighter. Outside of Ali, probably my favorite among the heavyweights. But I think Tyson, in his early years, was bigger, stronger and faster than Joe was. Unfortunately, great fights, like great fighters, are a vanishing breed. With all the contract disputes, rival boxing bodies and greedy promoters, seldom do we get that opportunity to see the best against the best anymore. Greed and politics has deprived fight fans of potential super bouts such as Holyfield-Lewis and Delahoya-Trinidad. It's also apparent that greed works as a smoke-screen for those who lack the pride and courage to face the challenge. So folks, let the debating begin. In your humble opinion, who was really the greatest? Was Louis better than Dempsey? Could Marciano have out matched Sonny Liston? How about Duran and Julio Cesar Chavez? Bring it on! That's what dream fights are all about.

Before I get to the first of my dream fight series, let's toss around a few more names. How about the immortal one, Sugar Ray Robinson, the fighter boxing purists view as, pound-for-pound, the greatest of all time. Yet it was Carlos Monzon and not Robinson who reigned the longest among all middleweight champs. You have to admit this one would have been a shootout! Who do I call? Monzon was a superb fighter. But the original Sugar Man was the essence of boxing perfection. During his prime, the Cat was without peer. If given the glorious opportunity to play promoter and put together dream fights, whom would you match up? Marciano vs. Frazier. What a slugfest this would be. How about the immortal Brown Bomber Joe Louis and the self-proclaimed greatest Muhammad Ali, or the marvelous one, Marvin Hagler against Roy Jones. I always wondered what the outcome would be if lanky hard punching Bob Foster challenged boxing's undisputed knockout king Archie Moore. One more please! Dempsey and Holyfield. The killer instincts of the Manassa Mauler against the warrior heart of the Real Deal. Whew! Here's my very first choice. It may shock and amaze yah! But the first

dream fight is, Mike Tyson and Smokin Joe Frazier! So, get "ready teddy" fight fans and hop aboard the spider's fantasy ship. Thanks to the benign god's of pugilism, we are on a journey to the land of the sweet-science. Madison Square Gardens is the place to be on this night. But it's not that simple. The Big Apple boxing shrine has been sold out for months and even the most cunning of scalpers cannot weasel up a ticket. Down around ringside it's a spectacle: a gathering of the elite and privileged. A smorgasbord of the who's who. This is the place to be seen. The high rollers are smoozing with Donald Trump and his army of cronies. Many of them are phony cynics who view boxing as the bastard child of sports.

They have little interest or respect for it's gladiators, but still, on this night, ringside at Madison Square is the place to be. They're here to pose, blow hot air and make a few connections. Mix a little business with pleasure. Hell, you can write it off on your taxes. Truth is, the only ring either has ever seen prior to this night, is the one around their bathtubs. Neither knows a left hook from a fish-hook. Yet this overwhelming inexplicable appeal of a heavyweight title fight has brought their kind out in droves. Let's not forget the high rollers of the mean streets. Remember, they also shelled out the big dough to make the ringside scene. For them, it's show time baby! The pimps, prostitutes, rounders, gamblers and gangsters.. and every mother's one of them dressed to the nines. Making a fashion statement as only street folks can. For them, this is much more than a fight, it's an event!

Ray Charles sings his stirring rendition of America the beautiful and the crowd explodes with appreciation. It grows louder as ring announcer Michael Buffer introduces the principals. First Tyson, weighing 218, and then Frazier thirteen pounds lighter at 205. It's obvious there are a great deal of Frazier fans in the house, but the response clearly indicates Tyson is by far the more popular. Referee Zack Clayton summons the fighters to the middle of the ring for last minute instructions. Not much difference in height, but Tyson's massive shoulders dwarf the stocky Frazier. Smokin' Joe's wearing his game face and casting the evil eye, but Tyson refuses to return the stare. The fighters return to their corners and await the bell. It's high noon time. All the trash talking and mind games are over.

Tyson moves quickly into the center of the ring, looking to throw the same dynamite that has turned his past five opponents into Rip Van Winkle. But you won't have to send a search party out to find Smokin' Joe, he'll come and get dead in your nostrils. Frazier's confidence is at an all time high. He's coming of a huge victory over the previously undefeated Muhammad Ali. The Garden's erupts, as the war-mongers blast away at one another. There's nothing slick here. None of those ostentatious displays that have become conspicuous with to-day's prima-donnas. This is a savage battle of the legendary kind. Like the one's that Sugar Ray and Jake used to wage back in the days of boxing's rudimentary stages. Joe moves in mounting another two-fisted attack, but the superbly conditioned Tyson meets him head on and fires back. The remaining two minutes of the round are a delightful exhibition of leather tossing fury. Both fighters landed some heavy bombs. As the round ends Frazier scores with a thunderous right to the jaw. But Tyson storms back to rock Smokin' Joe with a vicious over-hand right. Frazier scored the only knock down of the round, but Iron Mike finished strong. Tyson seems to be getting stronger as the round progresses. He's beginning to bully the lighter Frazier all over the

ring. Joe's mouthpiece is hanging out and his body is sucking wind, but his intrepid spirit will never allow him the luxury of a backward step. He courageously stays at the eye of the storm trading leather for leather. The round ends with both landing heavy artillery. Tyson has a slight mouse under his left eye, but Frazier's face is beginning to look like Willy Lump-Lump. His corner works frantically on a deep ugly cut under his right eye. Trainer Eddie Futch examines the swollen eyes and nasty cuts. He wants to toss in the towel, but Joe screams no! Futch relents and allows the fight to continue. But he also remembers the promise he made the late Yank Durham, who'd been Joe's trainer from the beginning.

Just prior to Durham's untimely death, Yank had asked Futch to watch over his kid. All these thoughts haunted and weighed heavy upon Futch's soul. Frazier was like his own son. Many of the fans and media are stunned at the turn of events. Frazier, who has been largely acknowledged as the most punishing heavyweight champ since Rocky Marciano, is now being punished and bullied. Tyson is loading up and landing his bread and butter right upper cut. But give Frazier his props: he's taking the shots and hanging in. But unless there's an act of divine intervention, Frazier is history. Eddie Futch yells "Stay down! Stay down!" Frazier stays down until the count reaches nine. It's a smart ploy and one that allows him time to recover. Clayton rubs Frazier's gloves on his shirt and checks his eyes. Being a veteran of over a hundred championship fights, he's reluctant to allow this to turn into a carnage. Joe assures him that he can continue, Clayton allows Joe one more chance. Suddenly, Tyson unleashes a clubbing over hand right to the temple and Frazier crumbles to the canvas. It's all over, no need for Zack Clayton to count. At 1:26 of the 6th round Iron Mike stops Smokin' Joe.

Next fantasy super fight pits the great featherweight champ Willie Pepp against boxing's latest hotdog, Prince Naseem Hamed. You're probably thinking this is a little too premature. How can you match this trash-talking windbag against the immortal Willie Pep? Truth is, boxing's new Prince of Dash and Clash has boldly proclaimed himself to be as great as Pep and Sadler. So as the fantasy fight promoter, I'll put this one together for you real soon on ... The Dream Fights.